

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Asking for Public Comment on Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative

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The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is soliciting public comment on a proposal to focus on sustainably managing forest lands in the Sierra Nevada. The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative has two primary objectives:

- Creating ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, thereby protecting and enhancing habitat and water quality while reducing the risk of catastrophic fire; and
- Creating sustainable local economic activity in the Region through increasing the sustainable production of renewable biomass energy and a variety of wood products.

"Many of our public forests are dangerously overgrown and in very poor health, increasing the risk of catastrophic fire, which has an extremely harmful impact on public health, our environment, our water and our economy," said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. Noting that forest management issues have historically been highly contentious, Branham added, "Our goal is to bring a wide variety of interests together, and focus on what we all agree on to take action on the ground. We recognize it won't be easy, but the alternative of the status quo is unacceptable."

The resolution states that sustainable forest management will result in a reliable supply of biomass that can be converted to renewable energy, as well as a variety of wood products, creating an opportunity for locally based sustainable economic activity.

The Conservancy's Governing Board will consider adoption of the resolution at its June 4 Board meeting. Branham indicated that receiving public comment is critical to ensure that the effort encompasses a wide range of interests throughout the Sierra Nevada. He added that the initiative will require the support of federal, state and local agencies, as well as environmental organizations, private businesses, tribes and the public to be successful.

The Initiative identifies a number of key benefits that will result from reducing the number of large, damaging fires and restoring forests to ecological health, including the following:

- Providing for protection of key habitats for a variety of threatened and endangered species;
- Protecting water quality and supply that flows from the Sierra – which constitutes 65 percent of the state's developed water supply;
- Creating living wage, long-term jobs in Sierra communities;
- Reducing air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Maximizing the sequestration of carbon in Sierra forests to help address climate change impacts in California.

The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution can be found on the SNC's Web site: www.sierranevada.ca.gov and is open for comment until May 1, 2010.